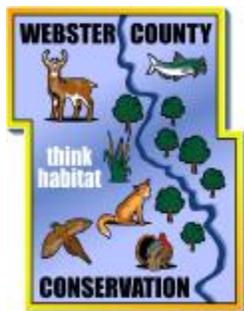


# WEBSTER COUNTY TRAIL PLAN

*A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR TRAIL EXPANSION & DEVELOPMENT IN FORT DODGE & WEBSTER COUNTY*

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*Connecting Webster County's  
great people and places*



February 26, 2009

Webster County Board of Supervisors  
Webster County Courthouse  
701 Central Avenue  
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

To the Board of Supervisors:

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the work that our task force has focused on for the past three years. The Trails Task Force was organized three years ago at the request of the Board of Directors of the Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County. The Development Corporation asked our task force to develop one trail plan for Fort Dodge/Webster County and identify resources and funding opportunities to bring the plan to fruition. In response to this request, the Trails Task Force developed four strategic goals:

- A) Coordinate, facilitate and develop one comprehensive and distinct trail plan for Webster County and Fort Dodge, working in concert with the County and the City.
- B) Become the focal point for promoting the importance of having an engaging trail system that links state, county and city parks in Webster County and Fort Dodge.
- C) Serve as the coordinating entity for advocating and building political capital, public support and financial backing for the trail system.
- D) Develop strategic partnerships with the other five counties in Region V for linking trails, utilizing the Region V trails plan.

Over the past ten years, trail system expansion in the U.S. has seen exponential growth. This growth did not happen by accident. Community, government and economic development leaders across the nation agree that trail systems offer communities, counties and regions value-added benefits in terms of health, quality of life and economic development. Investment in trails can require significant dollars, yet the return on investment in many regions has proven to be three to five times the investment or more. Many cities and counties are enthusiastically investing in trail systems, while others are missing the opportunity because they lack the will or the understanding of the benefits they offer.

Progressive communities and counties across America are finding that attractive and well maintained trails promote safe and livable communities and significantly contribute to the quality of life enjoyed by their citizens and families. Trails are valued for their ability to connect people with places and to nature itself. When integrated with features such as parks, recreational facilities, historical sites, schools, neighborhoods, etc., they can improve the overall character of a community and county. Research supports the fact that trails increase physical activity by citizens and youth, thereby contributing to improved health. Trails also increase recreational opportunities in counties because citizens use trails for recreational biking, walking, running, and cross country skiing.

Board of Supervisors letter  
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February 26, 2009

With this vision in mind, the Trails Task Force held its first meeting on February 2, 2006. Since that time and dozens of meetings, a significant amount of progress has been made including the development of a comprehensive trail plan. This trail plan has been organized in three phases.

- Phase 1: Link the current Fort Dodge Nature Trail with a new trail that goes north to Harlan Rogers Park and continues on to Kennedy Park, connecting these two important recreational venues with the city of Fort Dodge.
- Phase 2: Complete the City's plan for a trail that connects the Soldier Creek Trail with a new trail that runs along the Des Moines River and meanders through the south side of the city.
- Phase 3: Link the city of Fort Dodge trail to a trail that runs through the southeast part of Webster County to Brushy Creek State Park.

Phase I of the trail plan takes into account the importance of and need for our youth having a safe biking route/trail to the various recreational venues that our community and county offers, in particular, Harlan Rogers Park and Kennedy Park. A safe and well maintained bike trail to these two parks will provide adolescents with the opportunity to use these parks without requiring them to have car transportation, which for many youth, is not an option.

The Trails Task Force looks forward to sharing with you the details of Phase I of our plan, which includes cost estimates and fund development options. We welcome the opportunity to work with the County in making our trail system a reality and a true quality of life asset in our county.

Sincerely,

Randy Kuhlman  
Chairman  
Trails Task Force

Trails Task Force members:

Randy Kuhlman (Chair)  
Matt Cosgrove  
John Taets  
Nick Salmon  
Dave Sergeant  
Jaime Johl  
Sheilah Schroder  
Dennis Plautz

# **PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR THE COUNTY PARKS AND OPEN SPACES SYSTEM**

*Healthy, sustainable, and prosperous communities begin with vision and are backed with leadership, planning, & execution*

## **THE VISION**

*The vision is to create a welcoming community through people, parks, trails, & open spaces.*

## **THE MISSION**

*Our mission is to:*

### ***Strengthen Community Image & Sense of Place***

County parks, trails, outdoor recreation facilities, and open spaces are key factors in strengthening community image and creating a sense of place.

### ***Support Economic Development***

County parks, trails, outdoor recreation facilities, and open spaces improve property values, attract and retain businesses and residents, as well as attract tourists. Parks and recreation provide jobs and generates income for the county and for local businesses.

### ***Strengthen Safety & Security***

County parks, trails, outdoor recreation facilities, and open spaces provide safe environments for outdoor recreation and social interaction. Park professionals design facilities, programs, and services specifically to reduce criminal activity.

### ***Promote Health & Wellness***

Being active in county parks, trails, outdoor recreation facilities and programs, and open spaces improves physical and emotional health.

### ***Foster Human Development***

County parks, trails, outdoor recreation facilities, and open spaces encourage social, intellectual, physical, and emotional development.

### ***Increase Environmental Awareness & Cultural Unity***

County parks, trails, outdoor recreation facilities, and open spaces increase environmental awareness and cultural unity through experiences that promote environmental and cultural understanding and celebrate diversity.

### ***Protect Natural Resources***

By acquiring and protecting valuable natural resources as open spaces, such as rivers, streams, greenways, forests, prairies, wetlands, and other natural areas, natural resources are managed and critical habitat required for the survival of diverse species is preserved.

### ***Provide Quality Outdoor Recreational Experience***

Through programmed and self-guided outdoor recreation, a variety of benefits to individuals and society are achieved. Diverse recreational experiences provide low-cost entertainment for people of all ages and social classes.



## Editorials

FORT DODGE MESSENGER

23rd Year

Larry D. Bushman General Manager  
Walter B. Stevens Editor

Sat., Dec. 2, 1978

### A bicycle—not built for busy Highway 413

Most everyone acknowledges the need for a bicycle path adjacent to Iowa 413 north of Fort Dodge.

But, up to this point the prospects for having one built appear dim.

Oh, there have been discussions and expressions of support by various city officials. A petition signed by 487 was presented to the Fort Dodge City Council on Oct. 10 and the Webster County Board of Supervisors has been contacted about the project. The Chamber of Commerce board of directors has discussed the need and expressed its approval. Endorsement has come from the Fort Dodge Parks, Recreation, Forestry and Riverfront Improvement Commission.

The chief impetus has been from the Webster County-Fort Dodge Youth Commission which was responsible for circulation of the petitions.

Come to think of it, that is quite a bit of support. County supervisors haven't greeted the suggestion with a commitment of funds, nor has the Fort Dodge City Council although Mayor Herbert Conlon is on record as wholeheartedly in favor.

But at the moment (at this time and place) we suppose is the acceptable phrase), there has been no definite action toward funding the path. The mayor says continued contacts are being made with the Iowa Department of Transportation to include funding of a path along with the widening and improvement of '413' now in progress. But the DOT District 1 engineer, Donald Anderson, told the Messenger recently that it's too late for the state to spend any money on such a path. Anderson says no city-county feasibility report was received by the DOT when

requested about a year ago so bids were let for the highway work without any consideration of a bicycle path.

It's too late to do anything about a missing feasibility report, and so it appears that a bicycle path—if one is built—will have to be funded with local (city and county) money. But that's not an insurmountable hurdle, and the benefits and safety factors would appear to warrant the expenditure even at a time when every dollar of tax expenditures is receiving, and should receive, close scrutiny.

The cost? City engineering department estimates have placed it at about \$150,000, or \$35,000 a mile for the 4 1/2 miles from the Soldier Creek Bridge north to Kennedy Park. That's for an 8-foot wide hard surfaced path.

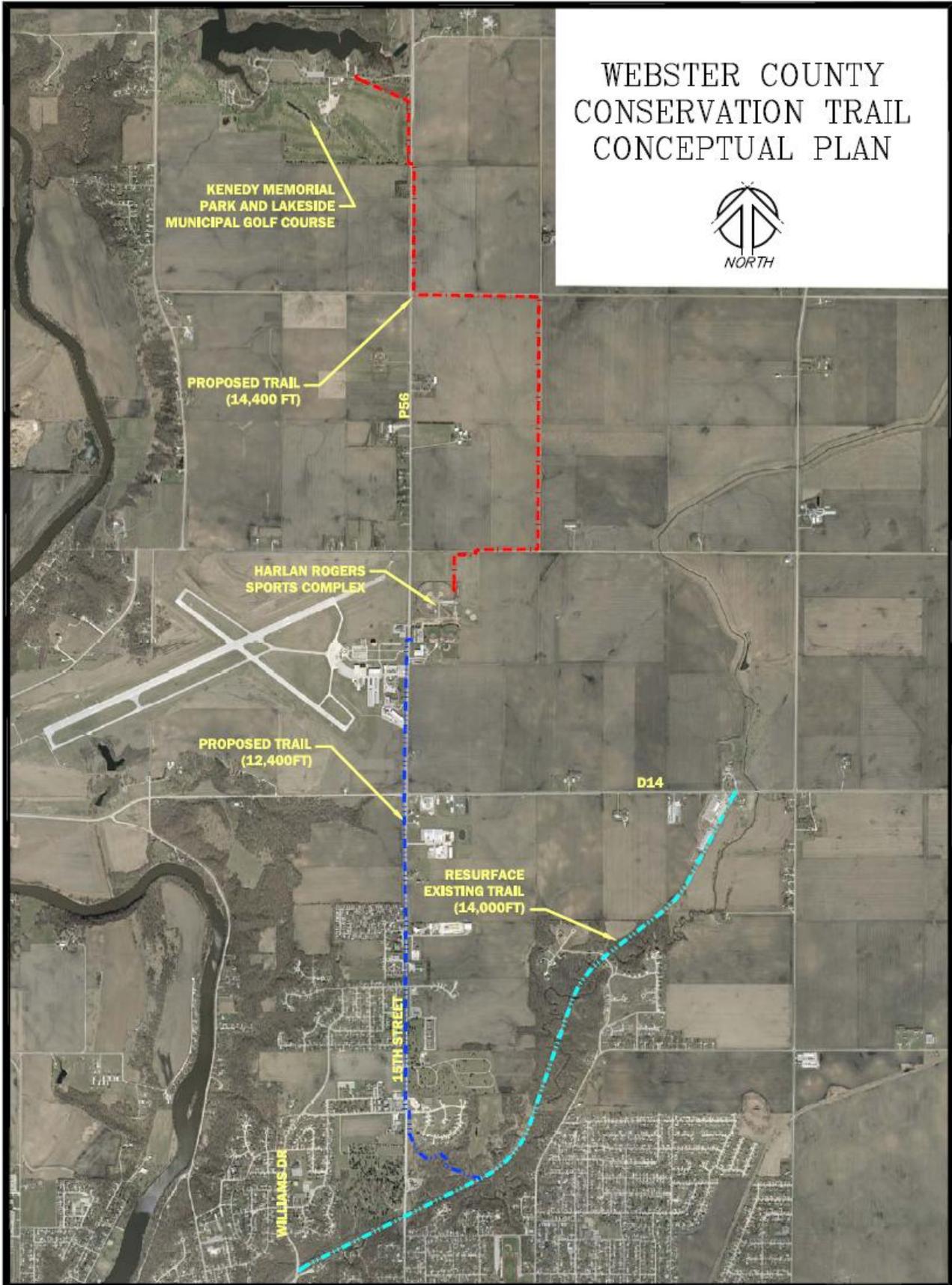
The benefits? Safety. Convenience. Recreation. Health. A saving of energy (gas).

How much is a human life worth? How hazardous is it to pedal a bicycle to and from Harlan Rogers Park, Kennedy Park, the Jolly Giant Fun Park, the residences and businesses now built or planned just off Iowa 413?

Let's get off dead center on this project. Let's get all these groups, public and private bodies and individuals who have been giving lip service to a bicycle path together in some manner and get the job done. If the path isn't built while the highway widening is being completed, the chances are it never will be.

Or must we wait for a headline telling of a fatal accident involving a bicyclist, young or old, who attempted to compete for space on a busy roadway built for motor vehicles?

# WEBSTER COUNTY CONSERVATION TRAIL CONCEPTUAL PLAN



KENEDY MEMORIAL  
PARK AND LAKESIDE  
MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE

PROPOSED TRAIL  
(14,400 FT)

HARLAN ROGERS  
SPORTS COMPLEX

PROPOSED TRAIL  
(12,400 FT)

RESURFACE  
EXISTING TRAIL  
(14,000 FT)

15TH STREET

WILLIAMS DR

P56

D14

**WEBSTER COUNTY TRAIL PLAN**  
**LINKING FORT DODGE – HARLAN ROGERS SPORTS COMPLEX – KENNEDY PARK**  
**COST ESTIMATE**

2/18/09

**Re-surface existing Soldier Creek Trail**

10-foot wide, hard-surface over existing trail from Williams Drive to 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
(2,500 ft.).

**ESTIMATED COST \$170,000**

**Soldier Creek Nature Trail to Harlan Rogers along 15<sup>th</sup> Street**

10-foot wide, hard-surfaced trail – new construction (12,400 ft.)

**ESTIMATED COST \$943,470**

**Trail through Harlan Rogers Sports Complex (3,200 ft.)**

**ESTIMATED COST \$220,000**

**Harlan Rogers to Kennedy Park (14,400 ft.)**

10-foot wide, hard-surfaced trail – new construction

**ESTIMATED COST \$820,480**

*\* Cost estimates do not include land acquisition or land transfer costs.*

**TOTAL COST \$2,153,950**



## WHY INVEST IN THE COUNTY PARKS, TRAILS, & OPEN SPACES SYSTEM?

1.) The county parks, trails, and open spaces system is an **economic engine**. Direct economic impacts of parks, trails, and open spaces include:

- ▶ Increases tourism revenues
- ▶ Contributes to business development and retention
- ▶ Increases real estate values
- ▶ Attracts people, including retirees
- ▶ Expands retail sales of food, lodging, supplies, and equipment
- ▶ Attracts the emerging creative class worker
- ▶ Improves community health by providing healthy lifestyle activities, therefore reducing health care costs



The Conservation Board, in the recent past, has estimated that the Webster County parks, trails, and open spaces system attracts over 200,000 visitors who contribute over 4 million dollars annually to the local economy. This \$4 million is an incredible return on the approximate \$400,000 budget to operate the county park system.

A 2007 Iowa State University Study, commissioned by the Sustainable Funding for Natural Resources Study Committee of the Iowa General Assembly, estimated that Webster County parks, trails, and open spaces had 384,664 park visits that contributed **\$9,706,996** into the local economy during!

With annual investment of \$150,000 from user fees and other revenue sources Webster County will **invest** \$1.5 million over the next ten years to replace existing infrastructure and provide new services and programs. These dollars will be matched with local, state, and federal dollars to accomplish goals.

2.) Linear trails and greenways contribute significantly to the local economy and to the wellness of the community by promoting a healthy lifestyle for our residents and visitors.

- ▶ Sales of outdoor gear, clothing, footwear, bicycles and other accessories for 2001 (nationally) amounted to more than 18 billion dollars (*Economic Benefits of Trails – American Hiking Society Fact Sheet*)

- ▶ Studies show that trail-related activities can (and do) lower health care costs. Regular exercisers filed 14% fewer health claims, spent 30% less time in the hospital, and had 41% fewer claims greater than \$4,000. (*Economic Benefits of Trails – American Hiking Society Fact Sheet*)

- ▶ Trails provide an important tool in combating the nation's obesity epidemic. In 2003 alone, taxpayers footed the bill for \$75 billion worth of obesity-related medical costs. (*Economic Benefits of Trails – American Hiking Society Fact Sheet*)

3.) Recent city, county, and private studies have identified trails, parks, and open spaces as key factors in community image and the ability of local businesses to recruit and retain a quality workforce.

4.) User fees and park revenues, such as camping fees, are reinvested back into the county parks and open spaces system for repairs, major maintenance, and capital projects. Park users often express more positive feedback when they can be assured that user fee revenues go back to directly support and pay for county facilities and improvements.

# R. A. Smith Study Implementation Plan

## Webster County/Fort Dodge Trail Plan OPTION 1

### Project Goal:

Construct a 10-foot, hard-surfaced trail that connects the existing Nature Trail in Fort Dodge to Harlan Rogers Sports Complex and John F. Kennedy Memorial Park.

### Project Description: Fort Dodge to Harlan Rogers to Kennedy Park

The proposed trail connects the Fort Dodge Nature Trail through Orchard Glen to Harlan Rogers Park. This trail goes north parallel to Hwy. 413 on the west side of the highway (backslope of R.O.W). The trail will cross Hwy. 413 at the entrance to Harlan Rogers Park, crosses the park and connects with a trail going north to Kennedy Park. Total trail length is 32,500 feet – 6.16 miles.

**Project Cost Estimate:** \$2,200,000

**Timing:** Completed in 2010

### Funding:

- \$2,200,000

#### Additional Sources

* Regional Transportation Grant	\$400,000
* REAP Grant	\$100,000
* State Recreational Trail Funds	\$200,000

#### City/County

* City	\$600,000
* County	<u>\$900,000</u>
Total	\$2,200,000

### Project Status

- \*Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has acquired the property from Harlan Rogers to Kennedy Park in the name of Webster County. Property was donated and purchased for trail purposes.
- \*Several alternative routes have been considered.
- \*The city & county will apply for Regional Enhancement Funds – April 6<sup>th</sup> deadline  
City/County will apply for additional grants in 2009 (REAP, State Trail Funds, Fed. Trail Funds, Stimulus funds). Need to show financial support from city/county to be competitive.
- \*Engineering will be completed by Feb. 2010
- \*Project bid - Spring 2010
- \*Construction - Summer 2010

\* Costs are based on January 2009 cost estimates from McClure Engineering.

# R. A. Smith Study Implementation Plan

## Webster County/Fort Dodge Trail Plan OPTION 2

### Project Goal:

Construct a 10-foot, hard-surfaced trail that connects the existing Nature Trail in Fort Dodge to Harlan Rogers Sports Complex and John F. Kennedy Memorial Park.

### Project Description: Fort Dodge to Harlan Rogers to Kennedy Park

The proposed trail connects the Fort Dodge Nature Trail through Orchard Glen to Harlan Rogers Park. This trail goes north parallel to Hwy. 413 on the west side of the highway (backslope of R. O.W). The trail will cross Hwy. 413 at the entrance to Harlan Rogers Park, crosses the park and connects with a trail going north to Kennedy Park. Total trail length is 32,500 feet – 6.16 miles.

**Project Cost Estimate:** \$2,200,000

### Project Breakdown

#### 1.) Soldier Creek Nature Trail to Harlan Rogers Sports Complex

Project Cost: \$943,470 Construction Year: 2010

Distance: 12,400 ft.

Project Sponsor: City of Fort Dodge

Co-sponsor: Webster County

#### Funding:

Regional Transportation Enhancement Funds	\$440,000
REAP	150,000
State Transportation Enhancement Funds	250,000
City (55%)	56,909
County (45%)	<u>46,561</u>
TOTAL	\$943,470

#### 2.) Trail through Harlan Rogers Sports Complex

Project Cost: \$220,000 Construction Year: 2010

Distance: 3,200 ft.

Project Sponsor: City of Fort Dodge

Co-sponsor: Webster County

#### Funding:

State Recreational Trails	\$154,000
City	<u>66,000</u>
TOTAL	\$220,000



## **LANDOWNERS MAKING THIS PROJECT POSSIBLE:**

Ed Beeh - 6620 ft x 20 ft = 3.03 ac – DONATION

Greg Horn – 1300 ft x 20 ft = .60 ac – BARGAIN SALE

Robert Christenson – 2600 ft x 20 ft = 1.20 ac – BARGAIN SALE

## **TRAIL TASK FORCE MEMBERS**

Randy Kuhlman – Chair

John Taets

Nick Salmon

Dave Sergent

Sheilah Schroder

Jamie Johll

Dennis Plautz

Matt Cosgrove

